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ABSTRACT

The Teacher Induction Experience, initiated by the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in 1974, is a planned sequence of practical experiences directed by a team of professionals who assist and support the first-year teacher in becoming an effective, competent member of the profession. The program addresses the need to prepare quality career teachers by providing a year-long transition from preservice to inservice training. An extended partnership is formed by the University faculty and local school personnel to promote a blending of theoretical concepts from the campus and the practical application in the unit school. Weekly meetings are held with the unit staff and the first-year teacher. The University specialist makes on-site visits to confer with the unit staff and provide the expertise and resources of the University. In addition, monthly seminars are held to provide additional support and information. The first year teachers also enroll in the graduate school and register for 6-12 credits of graduate study per year. (Author/JD)

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TEACHER INDUCTION--A PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT FOR FIRST YEAR TEACHERS

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TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM
AT
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-WHITEWATER

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Teacher Induction at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater is a planned program of assistance and support for beginning teachers by a team of professionals from the local school and the University. This program was initiated by the Wisconsin Improvement Program, a consortium of 18 teacher training institutions in Wisconsin in 1971 and implemented in 1974 by the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. From 1974 to 1984, the Teacher Induction Program was piloted with many changes resulting from this experimentation. As a result of this experimentation, 12 first year teachers, hired by five different school districts for the 1984-85 academic year, participated in the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Teacher Induction Program.

RESEARCH BASE

Research has shown that beginning teachers have many problems including discipline, isolation, evaluation of student work, and use of appropriate materials. This research has been conducted by Ryan (1970), Lortie (1975), and Elias, Fisher, and Simon (1980). Bush (1983) has stated that "under current conditions, the newcomers have to learn to swim very quickly or they will sink" and this results in a "survival mentality." Peterson (1982) has stated that the first year of teaching is the most crucial period in a teacher's career. Sandefur (1982) has stated that the lack of appropriate induction is the major cause of teachers leaving the profession during the first three years of teaching.

PROGRAM GOALS

The specific goals of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Teacher Induction Program are:

1. To provide a planned first-year teaching experience which makes possible a broad variety of professional learning experiences;

2. To reach a level of professional skill and judgment which characterize a well-qualified career teacher;

3. To raise professional competency to a level distinctly above that of the beginning teacher holding a bachelors degree;

4. To re-explore numerous teaching techniques/strategies and experience others;

5. To develop extensive professional understanding and familiarity within the inductee's scope of certification;

6. To synthesize various learning theories and to study their application to different types of teaching and learning;

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7. To develop an individual teaching style based on broad observation, discussion, and consultation.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The focus of the Teacher Induction Program is on providing assistance and support for the first-year teacher throughout the entire initial year of teaching. Participating administrators screen and select the inexperienced teacher. When the first-year teacher signs the contract, the Induction Team is formed immediately. This Team consists of (1) an administrator of the local school; (2) a mentor teacher--a teacher in the unit school who is teaching in the same subject/grade level as the inductee; and (3) a university consultant who is a specialist in the teaching methodology of the subject/grade level of the inductee.

The first-year teacher prepares a Personal Development Plan under the guidance of the Induction Team during the Induction Orientation meetings held in late August. The Personal Development Plan assists the new teachers in identifying their concerns about teaching and in organizing those concerns into six major categories. The six major categories are (1) management of student conduct; (2) planning; (3) instructional organization and development; (4) presentation of subject matter; (5) communication; and (6) testing. The Induction Team assists the first-year teacher in setting goals for achieving/overcoming the concerns identified in the Plan as well as assisting in identifying the methods and procedures for achieving those goals.

The Personal Development Plan becomes a continuous working document throughout the first year. Through the Plan, the inductee is encouraged to seek assistance from the mentor teacher at daily/weekly conferences and from the University Consultant through weekly written reports. Additional support and assistance are provided by the University Consultant through monthly on-site meetings of the Induction Team with the inductee.

Seminars are held monthly for all members of the Induction Teams. These seminars focus on common concerns of inductees. During 1984-85, the topics of the seminars have been (1) management of student conduct; (2) evaluation and parent conferencing; (3) anatomy of a lesson; (4) dealing with slow learners; and (5) dealing with the gifted and talented in the classroom. The seminars provide another opportunity for the Team to confer with the inductee and to provide assistance and suggestions for dealing with the daily concerns of the beginning teacher.

Any school system which hires a first-year teacher may participate in the program. The first-year teacher may be hired at 60-100 per cent teaching assignment with salary commensurate with load. In addition, $600 of in-service monies need to be generated by the local school for the benefit of the induction team.

The Teacher Induction Program requires admission to the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Graduate School. The Inductee enrolls for 3-6 graduate credits per semester which may be applied toward a graduate degree.

RESEARCH RESULTS

An experimental research design was developed to study the UW-W Teacher Induction Program during the 1984-85 academic year. The design included 12 inductees as the experimental group and 12 randomly selected first-year teachers who are not in an induction program as the

control group. Preliminary findings of the research are:

1. 17 percent of the control group left the profession by the end of the first semester while 100 percent of the experimental group are teaching at the end of the third quarter of the 1984-85 academic year;

2. first-year teachers in the control group had one or more preparations than the experienced teachers in the same school while the experimental group had the same number or fewer preparations than the experienced teachers;

3. 100 per cent of the experimental group felt free to seek assistance from their mentor/principal/consultant while the control group had no one to assist them;

4. sources of assistance for the experimental group were the mentor and/or university consultant or a combination of mentor/consultant/administrator.

Administrators involved in the program indicate:

1. fewer problems with the first-year teachers when they are working with the induction program--fewer student referrals, fewer parent calls, fewer student complaints;

2. a close working relationship between first-year teacher and the mentors is a primary reason for fewer problems;

3. new possibilities for experienced teachers to serve as mentors and to experience the in-services which were offered.

Inductees involved in the program indicate:

1. the mentor was a key person in the success of the first-year teacher;

2. the weekly report to the university consultant was especially helpful because it forced a review of the week's work;

3. inductees found in-class observations by mentor/consultant to be most helpful.

UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater administration has strongly supported this program since 1974 through financial support, administrative leadership, and faculty grants. The Program is administered by the Office of Student Teaching in the College of Education.

PROGRAM ENDORSEMENTS

The Teacher Induction Program at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater has received endorsements from Educational Testing Service, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, University of Wisconsin System, and the Wisconsin Association of Teacher Educators. The program is being replicated at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, -LaCrosse, and -River Falls.

A research study of Induction Programs for Beginning Teachers, completed by Educational Testing Service in 1980, cited the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater First-Year Teacher Program as one of 20 exemplary programs in the nation designed to assist the beginning teacher.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction through its Teacher Incentive Project, a project to improve teacher effectiveness, has recommended the UW-Whitewater Teacher Induction Model as one to be used in all schools participating in the project.

University of Wisconsin System Task force Report, BENCHMARKS FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION, 1985, has included the UW-W Teacher Induction program as the model to be used by the eleven teacher training institutions in the University of Wisconsin system.

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